

## **Hare coursing**

The 17 September edition of Kent News carried a report entitled “Police out in force this weekend to crackdown on hare coursing” referred to “illegal hare coursing” as if to imply there is legal version of this activity. So we have written to Kent News saying it is important for the public to understand that ALL hare coursing is now illegal under the Hunting Act 2004 even if the landowner grants permission.

## **Petition for wildlife protection post Brexit**

In newsletter number 80 the address for the petition should have been

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/140238> Many apologies for any inconvenience.

<mailto:SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk>

## **Lord Gardiner of Kimble – Minister For Bees**

Bee pollinated herbs are important forage for hares during the summer months. Grasses which predominate during the winter are wind pollinated. So we are pleased to note there is now a Minister for Bees – Lord Gardiner of Kimble and he is responsible for putting the Government's bee protecting plans into action. A ban on neonic pesticides would not only help bees in Britain but also in other countries. In America a staggering 44% of honeybee colonies collapsed during the past year alone and science is conclusively pointing to neonic pesticides as the major culprit. And the recently announced merger of agrochemical giants Bayer and Monsanto – the two major players in the neonics business, raises the alarm for an even more deadly environment for bees.

## **Re-introduction of mountain hares to Dartmoor**

We will have to complete a disease risk analysis as part of our licence application to English Nature and we are taking advice from the Devon Wildlife Trust who have had experience of the procedure in connection with their River Otter Beaver Trial. The circumstances regarding the beavers was unusual since they had already been released into the wild illegally, so it was necessary to capture and health screen the animals before they could be introduced legally. With regard to full protection of reintroduced hares Defra has said it would be legally possible for them to be added to Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. But DWT advise against this, saying the hares would be more likely to be accepted and indeed welcomed on the moor by farmers if they are free to conduct legitimate pest control if necessary. The entire project will need to be conducted according to International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) guidelines and Professor Anna Meredith has sent us the relevant publications. Anna Meredith holds a Personal Chair of Zoological and Conservation Medicine, at the Roslin Institute, University of Edinburgh and will be known to those of you who belong to the Rabbit Welfare Association through her contributions to “Rabbiting On”. We will also be contacting the National Trust who have had experience recently reintroducing water voles to Malham Tarn in Yorkshire.

## **Detection of leverets by drone mounted thermal cameras.**

Rodney's neurological health issues have been putting the drone at risk, so his daughter Sarah's partner Mark who is a dairy farmer near Holsworthy has taken it on. We still need to decide on a suitable thermal camera, most being well out of our price range. Mark's involvement in a conservation project should be good PR for the dairy farming industry. Meanwhile, in Germany a drone based system for detecting roe deer fawns concealed in pasture land is working well. Around 25% of these new born animals are normally killed by cutting machinery. Since leverets are smaller than deer fawns our system will need to be much more sensitive. Aside from the animal welfare aspect and distress caused to farmers the carcasses of wildlife killed can introduce potentially lethal botulinum toxin into the silage fed to livestock.

## **Support for hares during the winter**

Consider leaving over-grown areas of your garden until the spring. Such areas filter the air and reduce the intensity of biting winds whereas walls and fence panels simply cause turbulence. Supplementary food such as windfall apples and rabbit food can help but, as with bird feeding, this could attract rats.

[SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk](mailto:SWAFH@actionforhares.org.uk)

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